[80 cont.]
775 787 the following: "Because there are going to be more deaths in the house."

In this story we can appreciate three very clear facts in relation to the dead: 1) that these can return to the bodily form they had when living ; 2) that their presence is an omen of coming misfortune as it announces the death of some member of the family, especially of the closest relatives; 3) that, as we have already noted, the spirit is incapable of communicating with the living by word of mouth.

158 775 787 The blind belief that the Guajiro have in the apparition of the dead in bodily form is due, according to the investigations that we were able to make in part, to a psychological phenomenon: It is clearly seen in La Guajira, and the natives so recognize it, that people do not want to look at a dead person's face. This is owing to the fact that this face will be engraved very deeply on their memory, to the point that when the individual who has looked at it is traveling by road at night, or when it is getting dark, or when he is alone at night in his dwelling and worried, on opening his eyes he will clearly see the dead man in the form he had when alive. We therefore believe that what happens in this case is that the individual is obsessed with and has firmly strongly impressed on his mind the decomposing face of the dead person that, as we have said, stays strongly impressed on his memory through this same act. This observation of ours does not apply exclusively to Guajiro [171] Indians or to other primitives. It is also very common among the town people of practically all the regions of Colombia which we have visited. The psychic phenomenon of obsession and then the almost perfect reconstruction of the image engraved on the memory is a common occurrence among them. But if [81] we add to this the Guajiro's collection of beliefs related to the dead and the fear of the apparition of spirits, which are always harbingers of misfortune (death, sickness, misfortune in general), we can understand how a person so obsessed reconstructs in his nervous state the previously impressed image and, in his imagination, gives it a body. The effects of fear are then translated into a seemingly real image of the dead person, and the

[81 cont.]

158 individual is not capable of distinguishing between the merely 775 fictitious, the imaginary and the real. To him, the image so 787 faithfully rebuilt in his imagination is as real as the living image of the deceased. The explanation of the phenomenon, then, according to his mentality, is that the dead man has appeared before him for some reason or other.

775 This fact is complicated in addition by the belief that every dead person "retraces his steps," that is, he treads again all the paths he traveled during his life; he returns to places where he had been at different times; this is why he is "felt" very often. Many times the individual feels the presence of the dead, even if he does not see it. This Guajiro belief is [171 538] also found to be very prevalent in all Colombian folklore. The phenomenon that the Colombian people call "retracing his steps" corresponds exactly to the Guajiro version which we have just transcribed. Of course, according to popular legends, the dead "retrace their steps" when they are dying or a few [787] moments or even days before their death. To hear strange noises without apparent logical explanation, to see shadows, etc., are for the people evident signs that one of their relatives or friends, or even some person who in the past has lived in these parts, is dying or will die from one moment to the next. For the same reason they avoid walking alone along certain places when they know that someone who has lived there is close to death's door.

Degrees of danger in spirits. The Guajiro murderer suffers 682 a double punishment; first, the claim for compensation payment 775 for blood presented by the dead man's relatives, which involves his own death if he does not pay the sum agreed on; and second, the constant presence of the dead man's spirit, which never leaves him. For this reason, the murderer cannot enter a home where there are small children because the spirit of the dead man follows him, will climb over them, squeeze them, and make them [753] cry. If the children are sick, the murderer's presence is even more dangerous because the spirit will rapidly cause their death. If they are well they usually become ill. [82]

The death of a fellow being becomes a tremendous ob- [753] session with the Guajiro; the murderer is convinced that the dead man's spirit follows him everywhere. When he is ill he has